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RWANDA UPDATE: UN HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR PROGRAM

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Both the focus and functioning of the Human Rights Field Operation (HRFO) are finally improving, at least according to latest reports from Kigali and Geneva. (Caution: Those reports have fluctuated in the past between unrealistic optimism and despair.) The latest positive reports coincide with a period of one month during which Field Operation chief Bill Clarence has been on personal leave.

The focus of the Operation matches the human rights needs of Rwanda; its organization is to be reconfigured along the following lines:

- A Monitors unit observes and reports on the human rights situation in the country; serves as a confidence-building measure, particularly for refugees and idp's contemplating a return home; and, provides an increasingly rigorous international presence which is intended to deter acts of reprisal and summary justice.
- An Administration of Justice Unit will serve as a coordinator and clearing house for UN, bilateral, and NGO assistance for the Rwandan system of justice.
- An Investigations Unit will liaise with the Tribunal's Prosecutor's Office; while most of the functions are being absorbed by Goldstone's office, this unit will have the residual function of collecting and conveying to the Tribunal relevant information developed in the course of monitoring.

According to Embassy Kigali, the monitoring program is making "encouraging, incremental progress" and is beginning "to play the role envisioned at its inception." 65 monitors are currently deployed in the field (out of an entire staff of 85). They are present in each prefecture, but have not yet been deployed at the commune level. The expected arrival of 25 UNV's and 30 EU monitors at the end of February will permit full commune-level deployment.

The GOR appears interested in increasing the target figure of 142 monitors to 300, or two per commune. The GOR may bring this request to the UNDP Round Table. This encouraging sign of GOR interest in the activities and purposes of the monitoring program has been matched by its cooperative attitude and the broad latitude given monitors, according to the Acting Head of the HRFO, who also observes that the monitors have established good working relationships with the GOR and that monitor feedback has led to the arrest of several miscreant soldiers.

On the logistical and training side there has been progress as well -- although the HRFO continues to be reactive rather than proactive and has not foreseen predictable logistical difficulties. Headquarters is now in radio contact with most field stations. 30 all-terrain vehicles are in operation; another 30 are undergoing final repairs and more are on the way to Rwanda. The HRFO is expanding (from US Embassy facilities) into a house donated by the German Embassy and four buildings in the Belgian school complex. A new four-day

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TALKING POINTS: HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORS PROGRAM

-- At our last meeting we expressed continuing concern about lack of progress in the Human Rights Field office's efforts to establish itself and to work out logistical and coordination problems.

-- Since that time, we have observed some progress and are encouraged that monitors are now present in all prefectures, and that field offices have been equipped with the communication equipment and vehicles that permit them to begin to fulfill their roles:

- o to deter reprisals and acts of summary justice;
- o to provide reassurance to refugees and idp's contemplating a return to their homes;
- o to monitor and report on the human rights situation, enabling effective action to be taken with the GOR when significant abuses are observed.

-- On the latter point, we are particularly encouraged by the positive and productive approach taken by the Rwandan Government, which has given wide latitude of action to the monitors and which has entered into a good working relationship with the HRFO and the field offices.

-- We are interested in knowing whether the EU team of 30 monitors is to be fully incorporated into the HRFO (rather than functioning as an independent unit), as we believe it should be.

-- We would also be interested in hearing the views of the High Commissioner and Human Rights Center on the HRFO's role in coordinating Administration of Justice programs and the contributions of other UN agencies, governments and NGO's.

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